

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, XD
SUBJECT: REGIONAL FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

REF: DACCA 4580

1. WE HAVE BEEN WATCHING WITH INTEREST EFFORT OF
GOB TO PROMOTE REGIONAL FLOOD CONTROL WARNING SYSTEM
(REFTTEL) AND TO ENLARGE DISCUSSIONS UNDER WAY WITH
INDIA ON DEVELOPMENT OF RIVER SYSTEMS BY INCLUDING
NEPAL. THESE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN UNDERLINED MORE
PRIVATELY TO US BY BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR CHAUDHURY
WHO HAS ASSERTED THAT FOR GREAT VARIETY OF
MECHANICAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL
REASONS, PROBLEM OF EASTERN WATERS MUST BE TACKLED
ON REGIONAL AND NOT BILATERAL BASIS. IN THESE
DISCUSSIONS CHAUDHURY HAS STRESSED POLITICAL
CONSIDERATIONS SAYING BANGLADESH CANNOT STAND UP
ALONE TO INDIA AND NEEDS NEPAL'S HELP.

2. AS WE INTERPRET NEPALESE ATTITUDES ON THIS
ISSUE THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT GON MUCH PREFERS
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REGIONAL TO BILATERAL EXAMINATION OF THE
PROBLEM. HOWEVER, IN SHORT RUN, BANGLADESH
CANNOT LOOK TO NEPAL FOR SUPPORT IN ITS CURRENT
EFFORTS. AS INDIAN PRESS HAS NOTED, PRIME
MINISTER BISTA, DURING APRIL OFFICIAL VISIT TO
INDIA, STATED THAT NEPAL WAS NOT PREPARED TO
JOIN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND

BANGLADESH UNLESS INVITED BY BOTH PARTIES.

3. PRIME MINISTER BISTA RECENTLY TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT GON RELUCTANCE TO GET INVOLVED IN THESE BANGLADESH-INDIAN DIFFERENCES WAS DUE TO (A) NEPALESE BELIEF THAT AT THIS POINT THERE IS LITTLE OR NOTHING IN IT FOR NEPAL TO TAKE PART IN DISCUSSIONS FOCUSING PRIMARILY ON DOWN STREAM ARRANGEMENTS AND BENEFITS AND (B) MORE IMPORTANTLY, DESIRE NOT TO ANTAGONIZE INDIA AT A TIME WHEN ITS OWN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOI ON DEVELOPMENT OF VARIOUS WATER SYSTEMS, INCLUDING KARNALI, WERE PROCEEDING RELATIVELY SMOOTHLY (NOTWITHSTANDING OCCASIONAL SQUABBLES OVER FLOOD CONTROL MEASURES ON INDIA-NEPALESE BORDER WHICH RESULT IN FLOODING ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER). NEPAL SIMPLE DID NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE INDIAN GOODWILL AT THIS STAGE IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH INDIA.

4. HOWEVER, IN LONGER RUN, NEPALESE FAVOR REGIONAL OVER BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIA ON THIS SUBJECT AND PROBABLY ASSUME THAT LOGIC OF SITUATION PLUS LACK OF RESOURCES TO GO IT ALONE WILL COMPEL INDIA EVENTUALLY TO ACCEPT REGIONAL APPROACH. NEPAL'S INTEREST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN MULTILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS WAS MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR AT THE COLOMBO PLAN MEETING IN DECEMBER 1977 WHEN THE KING CALLED ON COUNTRIES OF THE REGION TO COOPERATE IN MANAGING AREA'S WATER RESOURCE AND PLEDGED NEPAL'S SUPPORT FOR SUCH VENTURES.

5. IN SPITE OF THESE NEPALESE-BANGLADESH DIFFERENCES IN TACTICS IN DEALING WITH INDIA, WE CAN SEE NO REASON WHY THEY SHOULD IMPINGE ON OR DETER DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES ON SPECIFIC PROJECT OF DEVELOPMENT OF FLOOD CONTROL WARNING SYSTEMS. HECK

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